

**Testimony of Jonathan Craig Allen, MD
Medical Director, Rushford Center**

concerning

**H.B. No. 7052- AN ACT PREVENTING PRESCRIPTION OPIOID DIVERSION AND
ABUSE.**

General Law Committee, February 21, 2017

Senator Leone, Senator Witkos, Representative Baram and members of the General Law Committee:

I am Dr. J. Craig Allen, Medical Director for Rushford and a member of the State Advisory Board for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and a member of the Alcohol and Drug Policy Council. I support the governors bill No. 7052 ***AN ACT PREVENTING PRESCRIPTION OPIOID DIVERSION AND ABUSE.***

According to the Connecticut Chief Medical Examiner's office, there were over 650 opioid related deaths in 2015 - the majority involving oxycontin, hydrocodone, heroin and fentanyl. Tragically, the number of deaths climbed to well over 800 in 2016.

Whenever a healthcare provider prescribes a medication it is common sense, and good clinical practice, to identify the target symptoms for that intervention. Discussion of the dose, the expected duration of treatment, potential side effects, drug interactions and, if applicable, proper storage and handling instructions should be fundamental.

Throughout my training as a child psychiatrist there was always an emphasis on this practice. During that time Child psychiatry relied primarily on psychotherapy with few FDA approved medication options. When using a medication in child psychiatry we had to be careful and meticulous, working with the child and family to assess and ensure efficacy while vigilantly monitoring for signs or symptoms of side effects. Unfortunately, this practice is not standard with all providers. A 14 year old gets a prescription for hydrocodone after dental surgery and there is no discussion with his mother that it is an opioid analgesic. My patient has foot surgery and is given Oxycodone without mention of a potential interaction with her benzodiazepine.

As discussed in previous testimony, Medication Assisted treatment is the most effective approach to help people suffering from an opioid use disorder. Electronic submission of prescriptions for buprenorphine based medications will greatly facilitate the prescribing process while reducing the potential for fraud and creating a system of trackable data.

I urge the legislature to support this bill and to support adequate funding to ensure access and coordination of evidence based treatment for those suffering from opioid use disorders.